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SUBJECT Responses to the President's Speech

CARRIE COLLINS: We're going to try and take as many calls tonight and get your responses to the President's speech and to the special order that followed that. And our guest, again, Congressman Wyche Fowler, a Democrat of Georgia.

Congressman, you are a member of the Select Intelligence Committee, which deals with this issue. And you also just returned, about a month ago, from a trip down to Central America. Now, we just heard your response on the floor, and you mentioned that you don't agree with the President's methods of bringing about his goals in Central America. Would you elaborate on that?

REP. WYCHE FOWLER, JR: I'll try, Carrie. And I'm delighted to be with you.

I tried to say, and I think it's necessary to reiterate, that I don't know anybody in the United States Congress that does not agree with the President's publicly avowed statements for our policies in Central America. I mean we are for stability in the region. We are for the protection and the fostering of human rights, if for no other reason than the pragmatic one. Because if you do not have governments that protect human rights, you inevitably go back to instability and more revolution, and the cycle continues. And we also agree that hostile influences ought to be contained or eliminated to the greatest possible extent in our hemisphere.

My question, and many of my colleagues that have some foreign policy responsibilities, is whether or not the methods chosen by the President are the best methods, are they successful, or are they actually counterproductive? And I do think that the continued emphasis on the military solutions,

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rather than political solutions and economic solutions, negotiations, serious negotiations, not just lip service, are the problems that we need to address.

I thought the President was more conciliatory in his tone this evening, though there was nothing new in his policy that I could identify.

But the question is, are we seeking a military solution in Central America, or are we genuinely trying to put together the kind of negotiated settlements that will lead to long-term stability and progress?

COLLINS: The President also announced in his speech that he will be sending a special envoy down to El Salvador to help with elections. Is that a step towards a non-military solution?

REP. FOWLER: It is indeed. And I certainly support that. I hope that it will be a person of sufficient stature in foreign affairs, and authority, that will be able to deal with the whole range of problems, economic, political and military, in Central America. I was surprised that he did not name him or her this evening. But I support that concept and think it's a positive step towards the kind of solution that I described.

COLLINS: Now, this is the first time that the opposing party has taken on a special order after a speech before a joint session of Congress. Why this issue and why this time?

REP. FOWLER: Beats me.

[Laughter]

REP. FOWLER: It is the first time. But I think it was -- I think we get so many calls for reaction from the press and from the citizens across the country, that this was an experiment that probably will be repeated.

COLLINS: Okay. And speaking about getting a response, we're going to go right to the phones. We've got a call standing by from Virginia Beach, Virginia....

MAN: The speech of the President of the United States speaks for itself. I am so proud, and foresee a sunrise for Central America. God bless President Reagan and God bless the good and conscious people of this country that will support him in his courageous step in the area of Central America. It's about time that the people that take freedom and democracy for granted will realize that you don't cure cancer with aspirin. And communism is cancer.

Let's show Russia, Cuba, Nicaragua that there is a limit on the aggressiveness of communism doctrine in our Free World. If we do not promptly, our children of the United States will not have the same life that we're living, thank God, now.

COLLINS: Caller, what do you mean, act promptly?

MAN: Your country, America, face reality. Freedom has a price. And stop the mislead propaganda of the United States about reality on Central America and foreign affairs.

I am a businessman in Guatemala, and I have to struggle day by day with the threat of communism, the guerrillas destroying our economy, burning villages, farms, raping our women, killing our children.

I ask the United States of America, the Congress, just a question: What would happen if that would be happening in this country?

COLLINS: Okay. Thank you.

MAN: If you love your country, your family and liberty, help this great man called Reagan, which I am very proud of him, that history has already a superlative place for him.

COLLINS: Okay. Thank you.

REP. FOWLER: Carrie, I don't know that any elaboration -- it wasn't a question, just a comment.

Of course, whenever you have violence, you have instability. And violence is the fact of life in Central America. If the violence continues, it doesn't make any difference whether it's coming from the right or the left, the communists or the capitalists, then we're going to continue to have refugees coming north to the United States, people homeless, and the terrible tragedies that the caller described.

The question is whether or not the military solution ought to be the primary goal of the United States, or whether it's possible. And I think we'll probably be hearing more about that from other callers.

COLLINS: Lompoc, California.

MAN: ...All I have to say is my commander-in-chief is doing a very good job. That's all I wanted to say tonight.

REP. FOWLER: Thank you very much for calling.

COLLINS: Now, you -- as I said, you just took a trip

down to Central America. And the caller previous to this caller mentioned the activity that was going on there. Now, I understand there were reports coming out that the guerrillas in El Salvador are doing quite well for themselves. What is your understanding of that, having just returned?

REP. FOWLER: Well, Carrie, I think there are serious questions and some factual determinations upon which some of us are going to disagree. And I think we've seen lately that we are very worried about the government of El Salvador, that we are supporting. They have had free elections. And we hope that they are going to be able to build support and minimize the violence. And most of our aid -- or all of our aid, across the board, economic and military, is to try to contain the guerrillas and eliminate that threat.

But certainly what I heard, and since I have been back we have seen that there have been many statements out of the State Department and people who know who are very concerned that the guerrillas are gaining and that there's more and more damage being done by the guerrilla forces.

And, of course, that is one of the reasons for the President's specific request to increase the military aid, and that is to train more combat soldiers in El Salvador and do everything they can to discourage the guerrilla activity.

But it's a very complex situation. It's not going to be solved overnight. And that's one of the questions that the President did not address this evening, which is how long are we willing to go on, how long is it going to take, what kind of force is necessary.

And maybe I can spark a little controversy with your listeners out there by saying this: that if El Salvador and the region is in the vital security interest of the United States, should the President of the United States be saying what he did tonight, that he has no plans whatsoever for American forces? Of course we do not ever want to use American forces when it is not necessary. But if our own backyard is in our vital security interest and if the threat is as great as the President said it was this evening, should he, as commander-in-chief, or should we, as the Congress, rule out the use of American military forces if that is necessary to protect the national security interest of the United States?

COLLINS: Congressman Wyche Fowler is joining us. And we're getting your responses on the President's speech.

Hialeah, Florida. What did you think of the President's speech tonight?

MAN: ...I thought it was great. And God bless the President of the United States.

I am a combat veteran. I fought with the Marine Corps in Vietnam. And I am Nicaraguan-born. I was raised in California. I've been to Nicaragua and I've seen what the Sandinistas are doing in my country, in Nicaragua.

COLLINS: When was the last time you were there?

MAN: I was there before and after the takeover of the Sandinistas.

Now, I ask Representative Fowler, what's going to happen to all the strong people of Texas when the domino theory takes effect and all these Texans are going to be fighting the communism when it's too late? When you have people like Christopher Dodd out of Connecticut, you have Kostmayer out of Pennsylvania, and the Representative that's with you right now --what's going to happen when communism strikes the Rio Grande?

REP. FOWLER: Well, I think you may have been on the phone waiting to come on. I think I raised that question. If communism is threatening the Rio Grande or any of the citizens of the United States of America, then we will unquestionably use American forces to defend ourselves. And that's why we have an American armed forces.

COLLINS: Let's go out West to Monterey, California.

MAN: I'd like to ask the Congressman, in view of all the facts of the situation in Central America, how can you maintain that President Reagan is trying to impose a military solution when in fact the exportation of aggression from Nicaragua and other sources is in fact in trying to impose a military solution? It seems to me you've got the -- you're mixing apples and oranges, and not facing reality.

REP. FOWLER: Well, that's a good question. And I'm certainly not trying to mix apples and oranges, or metaphors. But we have signed, along with all of our neighbors in the hemisphere, what is known as the Rio Treaty, signed in 1947, that we will not violate the national sovereignty of any of our neighbors. And if another country in the hemisphere is doing it, that does not give us license to throw away and tear up our charter obligations in the Organization of American States or anywhere else.

I wish that the president had spoke longer and in more detail about that problem this evening. Because if the Nicaraguans, as the President says, is importing arms to aid the

guerrillas in El Salvador, I would have liked to know what our policy should be toward the Nicaraguans. He described conditions in Nicaragua, much of which I share. But the fact of repression and the fact of broken promises does not give us an excuse, in my humble opinion, to use any means necessary to try to tell any country what kind of government they will have or what kind of government we will tolerate in the hemisphere.

Even if we could -- and I would agree with that. I'd like -- that'd be a nice -- that'd be a nice world. But even if we could, which we can't, we then get to the question of what our treaty obligations are and whether or not, if one country is going to act like a monster, whether that gives us a license to do the same.

COLLINS: Spring, Texas. Did you see the President's speech tonight?

MAN: Yes, I did.

COLLINS: What'd you think?

MAN: I liked it. You know, a lot of things went through my mind when I was looking at the speech. And one, I went through the era of reconciling in my mind Vietnam, and in particular with Central America. I went through support in the middle and late '60s to absolute revulsion when the true facts, as I see them today, came out.

Now, you have a tendency to be sort of negative with regard to any involvement that we might have in Central America. On the other hand, this is not seven or eight thousand miles away from where we are.

COLLINS: So what do you think we should do, then?

MAN: Well, I think, in some respects -- now, this is indirectly answering your question. But the Sandinistas, in some respects, have blundered by showing only an exchange of dictatorship to dictatorship.

My question to Representative Fowler is -- and I'm not doing this from an argumentative position. But what is the alternative? That's a question. The second question might be, what -- you mentioned pragmatics. Three-fourths -- according to the President's figures, that is -- three-fourths of all the aid that's going down there is non-military.

We realize that violence is horrible. But what happens if the leftists take over by absence, by our absence or any absence created by non-military support?

What is the alternative, Congressman?

REP. FOWLER: Well, I think that's a fair question. Let me try to do my best to answer it.

The alternative is to seek a regional solution in Central America by working with our allies in Central America, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, in trying -- all of whom have at least as great an interest in not having hostile influences in their neighborhood as we do. In fact, the countries that I have just named have been meeting, as you probably know, calling themselves the Contadora group, named after an island on which they met, and have said over and over again that we ought to get all military advisers, military activities, to the greatest possible extent and as soon as possible, out of Central America.

But we've got to seek a combination of economic, political, and military solutions as a last resort.

But I think that, to answer your question, the alternative is to openly and publicly acknowledge that the United States should not be doing it alone, that we ought to be working in conjunction with our allies. All of our Western European allies agree on that fact, with the exception of Margaret Thatcher in Britain. The French have criticized us. The Germans have criticized us. The Italians have criticized us. The Belgians have criticized us. The Dutch have criticized us. I could go on and on.

The reason is that they -- the same criticism that I have. The objective is a worthy one, the containment of communism. The question that we ought to be asking ourselves, is our policy, the way we are doing it, successful? And it seems to me that the evidence is mounting that rather than containing this cancer, as one of the callers called it, we are uniting the country of Nicaragua against the United States, being accused of the United States being the bully coming down and supporting those who would overthrow a government, and once again positioning ourselves as being the heavy in our own backyard.

We've got to learn some lessons of history. We shouldn't be doing it by ourselves.

COLLINS: Seattle, Washington.

MAN: ...It seems to me that if we are advocating our American system, and so on like that, that perhaps we ought to just offer statehood to Puerto Rico and Salvador.

Would you like to comment on that, please?

REP. FOWLER: Well, I think that the people of Puerto Rico are going to make that decision very soon. They will have a vote as to whether or not they ought to join the Union, if they wish to join the Union.

I haven't thought about statehood for El Salvador. Despite the fact that it's pretty close, as the President described, I'm not sure that we ought to extend statehood that far down into the isthmus.

A stronger case -- I am greatly in support of the people of El Salvador, their courage in fighting this expansion of communism, once they have had this elected government. But a much stronger case could be made, if you were going to advocate statehood, for Panama, where we have unquestioned security interest, because of the canal, and where we have millions, probably billions of dollars invested of American free enterprise and located in that country.

But for some of you, I'd like to remind that when we had the debate over the Panama Canal, there was substantial opinion in this country, including Ronald Reagan, that that would be the worst possible thing that we could ever do, to transfer the canal, that it would lead to a takeover, that it would lead to loss of security in our backyard. And the State Department this week, only this week, issued a report that said that our finest friend in Central America was Panama, that it was a bulwark of the democratic process, that we had shored up our security by the way that the transfer of the canal was in operation.

So, I urge all of you to examine the rhetoric, try to determine the facts for yourselves about what is our best policy and best interest in Central America.

COLLINS: Fort Benning, Georgia.

MAN: I'm a staff sergeant in the United States Army here at Fort Benning, and I'm an instructor here.

REP. FOWLER: Proud of you, Sergeant.

MAN: Well, thank you very much.

There's a couple of things I wanted to say, and I'd appreciate it if you'd answer my questions after I finished all three of them.

The first thing is that it occurs to me that the President of the United States is the elected leader of our country, and he has made a decision as to how our country should proceed in a policy matter. And I wonder why it is that an

elected representative, who really has no more experience in military or policy matters than any other common individual, other than being elected by a representative group of his state, really has the knowledge or the know-how to challenge those policy decisions. Once our leader has made a decision, it occurs to me that it's our responsibility to lockstep and follow him.

Now, you know, I heard it said in his speech that this was not and should not be a partisan situation or a partisan argument. But it occurs to me that this is a partisan argument. It is a liberal-versus-a-conservative argument, not a Democratic-versus-Republican argument.

Now, my company today, a company of initial-entry soldiers, shot today for qualification. They were shooting as basic trainees to qualify with their rifles. We had to stop today because we could not afford the bullets, in the United States Army, in order for them to qualify.

When they bivouac during basic training, they do not have enough money on this post to provide them with air mattresses. They sleep on foam mattresses on the ground.

And it occurs to me that this is a general perception that we in the military have, that those in the liberal sector simply do not wish to provide the money or have not yet come to the point where they're ready to pursue the things that we must in this country to show a strength and a determination that eventually we're going to have to show.

I'm going to go to Central America someday. I'll be there and I'll fight. And it'll be because this country hasn't shown the resolve that it must show to prevent me from going there.

Thank you very much.

COLLINS: Caller, before you go, the President said in his speech -- and we talked about this -- that activities in Central America do affect our national security, of this country. Do you think that's the case?

MAN: Oh, absolutely. You know, this isn't a Vietnamese situation. It's nowhere near a Vietnamese situation. In the first place, in Vietnam we accomplished our mission. Our mission to police an area. Our mission was not to purge that entire section of a cancer. Our mission was to police a southern sector. We did it. We did it well. And we accomplished our mission without the support of our country.

Central America is a situation in which we can clean out

that entire environment within six weeks if there is a resolve from our country to do so. If our Congress tells us to go into Central America and clean that portion of the country out, we can and will do it within the specified amount of time, no matter what the amount of time is set by our command.

COLLINS: Okay. Thank you, Fort Benning.

REP. FOWLER: Well, Sergeant, as a graduate of the Fort Benning Infantry School, I want to say that I hope that you'll spend a little time, rather than preparing your political speeches, reading the Constitution of the United States. The President is the elected leader, the President of the country. But we have a bicameral system. We have a Legislative Branch and an Executive Branch and a Judicial Branch. And under the Constitution of the United States, we are jointly responsible for setting the foreign policy and the domestic policy of the United States.

I'm very happy to hear that you don't have enough air mattresses to be comfortable. But that does not -- it's not going to cause me to lose any sleep tonight. We are trying to prepare tough men. And when I was there, we slept on -- didn't even have the foam. We used blankets. So, if that is your only complaint about the service to your country, I hope that you won't pass that on to your troops.

And lastly, I have certainly not raised any partisan questions tonight. And most of my colleagues -- if you saw the debate after the President's speech, this is not a partisan issue. It's not a liberal or conservative issue. It is what is in the best interests, the vital interests of the United States of America. And how we achieve the alliances with the people who live closest to us, in Mexico, in Panama, in Honduras, in El Salvador, in Nicaragua, and how we achieve long-term stability that will enable us to trade and work together, those are the questions. And the only way to do that is to get together, as a Congress, in conjunction with the President, and at the same time protect the vital security interests of the United States.

COLLINS: Culver City, California.

MAN: ...The other question I had dealt with the President's message tonight. And I've heard a lot of people talk about how we should learn from our recent mistakes, etcetera, etcetera. There's been quite a few people expound on that. And obviously, they're talking about Vietnam.

I think, really, our most recent mistake was in Iran. And I think that is a lesson that we should learn. That when we cut a country loose, what happens to the country? There are

bloodbaths all over.

Would you like to respond?

REP. FOWLER: Well, I think that there are lessons of history. And our policy -- policies in Iran are certainly subject to all sorts of hindsight and mistakes.

I think the debate over Central America, though, ought to be focused, if we're going to go into that area, on the fact, as Admiral Bobby Inman, who was the Deputy Director of the CIA, said when he left, one of the most respected of our intelligence officers, that we have not learned the lesson that sometimes it's better to have an unfriendly government that you can at least deal with than have a government that we helped install that then cannot govern. That's when you really get into trouble, when you go to all this effort to prop up a government, and all of a sudden it goes under. That's what happened in Iran. And after we failed with the government that we were supporting, we got the Ayatollah.

Now, of course, it's much more complicated than that. And in the brief time, we can't go into it in any great detail.

But I wish you'd think about the other proposition. And that is, simply, that we just can't always have exactly the kind of government that we would like in these countries. And we cannot dictate to the people of Nicaragua, who they're going to have as their leaders.

We want elections, yes. But the Russians have elections too. Sometime elections don't prove anything.

But when we stand on firm moral ground and when we attempt to work with our neighbors in the hemisphere, our allies, and say, "We want your help. We want your participation. We want to work with you to promote the common values that we share, capitalistic values of good economies where you can trade, and governments that share those resources with, the biblical phrase, the least of these, our brethren," we have a real opportunity for progress.

But if we think that we can determine, in every sovereign state, what kind, precisely, of government that we are going to require, I think we're making a tragic mistake.

COLLINS: Miami, Florida.

WOMAN: I am from Nicaragua. I have been here for four years, after the communists took over my country. I want to tell you and all the Americans how lucky you are to have a President

like Mr. Reagan. If all the congressmen and all the men in the House of Representatives has his clear view about what the communists want, you North Americans won't have to suffer what the refugees from all part of the world has to suffer, without our houses, our land, or missing our families that the communists have murdered.

I pray to God that all of you never suffer what the communists have done to us. I feel sorry for the North Americans that still believe in the negotiation with the communists. Because in a few years, if they win, you, the North Americans, will be, if you are not a communist, in a concentration camp with all of us that are not, because we will not have another free country to go.

And to those representatives, especial to the one from New Mexico, they won't think the same way if they were from any countries from Central America.

And Mr. Fowler, if you went to my country, Nicaragua, maybe you passed by my house. It took us ten years to make. And now a Russian communist is living there.

Thank you.

COLLINS: Caller, before you go, are you -- what about negotiations between the Nicaraguan government and the leftist...

WOMAN: You will never have to negotiate with those people. They can tell you any lie, and they will never do what they say.

COLLINS: Now, what happened to you when the Sandinistas took over?

WOMAN: Well, my husband is North American. And that was the only thing. They gave us 15 minutes to leave our house. And after, I asked them why, because, you know, we were not guilty of anything. We were not even with the government, with Somoza. He say that my husband has the three aces. And I asked him what the three aces means. And he say he's rich, he's from a good family, and the worst of all, he's North American.

COLLINS: Okay. Thank you, Miami.

Go back to the phones?

REP. FOWLER: Well, my only response, I think -- of course, my sympathies go out to the caller, my deepest sympathies. Anybody that has to flee their country under whatever circumstances.

But the question of negotiations will not go away. We negotiate with the Soviet Union, the Communist Soviet Union, because the alternative is all-out war. We negotiate with the Chinese Communists. President Nixon is the one that broke that ground. And we have had peace and have not had to fight since those negotiations continue with those countries.

We cannot walk away from it, but we cannot refuse to talk, when the only alternative to refusing to negotiate, refusing to seek constructive discussions in the region is to create more and more refugees, like the caller.

COLLINS: Maryville, Arizona.

MAN: I'd like to address a couple of questions to the Congressman.

Number one, Congressman, I am from [unintelligible]. Before the American people expect to make any kind of agreement with the communists, it is totally foolish [unintelligible]. This will never happen.

I'd like to hear your comment on that.

REP. FOWLER: Well, I think I just gave the comment on that. I know there are people who think that any negotiations are fruitless. But the President, President Reagan, supports negotiations, called the START talks. We are trying to enter into arms control because it's the only way to make the world more safe rather than less safe.

And for those of you, like this caller and the last, that say we don't want to talk, we should never negotiate, certainly we should negotiate from strength. We're doing that. We are trying to get our allies to be with us so we don't fight alone to control communist expansion.

But the alternative to talking is to blow ourselves up. And I don't think that's a very acceptable alternative, and neither does the President of the United States.

COLLINS: Indianapolis, Indiana.

MAN: I'd like to make a comment, please, on the gentleman from Georgia. He called and he talked about not being able to have air mattresses and things. And I'd like to say that the comment he made, I thought, was not very good, because he took the comment on the air mattress and he did not make the comment about the bullets, not having the bullets. And these people are fighting for our country.

REP. FOWLER: Well, I fought for our country. And I did not mean to deliberately -- I tried to answer the question specifically, as he asked me to.

I find it very hard -- and I've already made a note to find out about why there is a shortage of bullets there. We've increased the expenditures in the military budget every single year for the last three years by very large amounts. It's the only place where we have not cut in trying to balance the budget and follow President Reagan's recommendations. He's proposing another 10 to 12 real increase after this year.

I will find out why there are not enough training bullets at Fort Benning. And if they let me come back, I'll report to you on it.

But I didn't think that other comment ought to be left without some response to it.

MAN: ...the air mattresses. But the bullets are different.

As far as the other comment I'd have to make -- if the Russians can attack Afghanistan and they can go in there with their brute force, or they can go into Czechoslovakia, or wherever; and we have people that ask for our support, and I am in full agreement that we should go in and support anyone that asks us to thoroughly, and with people, whatever.

I've never been in the Army, but I personally would be willing to go.

And I appreciate your comments.

REP. FOWLER: Well, I appreciate yours. And I do think that that is a real question that I hope we will never have to address, as to whether or not, if our vital interests are being threatened in our own hemisphere, whether or not we will have to go back to the draft, have to use American forces. And Lord knows, all of us are trying to prevent that.

But I appreciate your comments.

COLLINS: Let's go to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

MAN: I'd like to say a couple of things. First of all, in response to what that gentleman said about giving statehood to Puerto Rico. I think that'd be the greatest thing that could happen to Puerto Rico. First, because we're all American citizens. And second, among other things, that Puerto Rico, having their population smaller than practically all of the

states of the Union, has given more lives in wars fighting for the United States than any other state.

Second, with regards to President Reagan's speech, I think it was a very good speech, although he was a little bit short. I always wonder why nobody ever says things clearly.

COLLINS: What do you mean?

MAN: I don't understand why people don't see that we have Cuba, we have Grenada, we have Nicaragua, El Salvador is falling. And you can bet that if Salvador falls, Guatemala's going to fall, Honduras is going to fall, Mexico's going to fall. And where are the United States going to stand?

I mean, someday, the United States is going to have put up or shut up.

COLLINS: Caller, do you think we ought to send...

MAN: ...fight for their life, or they're going to have to just give up, because that's the aim of communism -- the United States -- because that's the only adversary that the United States has -- the Russia has.

COLLINS: Do you think we ought to send troops down there, in addition to aid?

MAN: If it's necessary, I think it should. Because this is the domino principle. All they're trying to do is block the United States. They're going to isolate the United States. And I hope I'm not alive to see the day that all our rights, all our liberties, all our congressmen, all the liberty of press, the media, and everybody will be eliminated, like they have been eliminated in Cuba, in Nicaragua, in Russia, in Poland, in Czechoslovakia. The unions -- look what's happening to Solidarity in Poland. No unions. And that's the aim of communism, the United States. And the time will come -- I hope not, but the time will come that, due to the efforts of the liberals in the United States, that's going to happen.

COLLINS: Okay. Thank you, San Juan.

...New Jersey, go ahead.

MAN: I've been listening now for the past hour, and it seems as though, if I can take your response tonight, the cross-section we're getting is almost unanimous -- just about unanimous throughout the country that people support the President and seem to favor some kind of intervention on the part of the United States to help the government of El Salvador to suppress the rebels.

And yet we're listening to the Congressman here, who seems to be subtly saying, well, maybe we shouldn't; we should negotiate.

What is there to negotiate with? You've got a group of a few thousand rebels who say that they have some rights to take over the government. They want to change the government. And yet we saw last year where 85 percent of the electorate came out and they participated in the vote and they wanted democracy and they want to select their own government. And we're saying negotiate with people who don't want to take part in elections, who want to dictate. We've seen it happen all too often throughout the country.

And I'm wondering, what about here in the United States? If the consensus that I've listened to tonight is any indication, why do we have these liberal congressmen telling us, you know, maybe we shouldn't give the President what he wants, or maybe we should give him half of what he wants?

REP. FOWLER: Well, I just will hold my tongue as to your interpretation of what I have said. Obviously, you haven't listened very closely. I said very clearly that I supported our objectives in El Salvador and that we do have an elected government there. And that is why the Congress, in conjunction with the President, is trying to help that elected government stay as the choice of the people and fight off aggression.

The people hear what they want to hear. And we don't get a cross-section of the people calling in to C-SPAN, as much as we would like to. We get a cross-section of the people who are up at this hour or happen to be listening to the program or who are interested enough in public policy to do so because they -- they, being C-SPAN -- provide a very fine service of information to the American people.

In conclusion, before we have to go, I would just like to say to the people of the United States who are listening that I was pleased to have the opportunity to be on the show this evening; and to simply urge you, as one caller suggested, to look behind the rhetoric of any and all elected officials, including Wyche Fowler from Georgia or your congressman or the President of the United States. That's the only way that we have a truly representative system, is for you to be an informed citizen.

If you believe that what is happening in Central America are affecting -- is affecting our vital security interest, then you have to ask yourself, should we be using American forces to control it and contain it as soon as possible? If you believe that it is in our vital national security interest to have a certain kind of government in El Salvador or Nicaragua, then you

have to ask how long you are willing to fight for that and how long you're willing to support the protection of that government in office.

And these are legitimate questions. I do not quarrel with them. But this is the area that the debate ought to center. All of us want to minimize communism. We'd like to get rid of it forever, because we know what it does to people in Afghanistan and Poland and all those that the caller asked. We believe in a moral system of values. We believe in capitalism as the best way to give encouragement to people and self-determination.

The question is not waving the patriotic flag. The question is how serious are we about it, how successful is our policy, and how far are we willing to go to insure that policy.

Thank you, Carrie, very much for having me.